

CHAPTER 2

DIRTY ISSUES

Some *Drummer* Covers Selected by Artist, Photographer, and Model

- **The *Drummer* Salon in the Titanic 1970s: The Power of the *Drummer* Editorial Desk, Sam Steward, Jim Kane, Robert Opel, Al Shapiro, and an Iconic Dinner Party Hosting Tom of Finland**
- **Shooting *Drummer* Covers: Robert Mapplethorpe, Lou Thomas, David Sparrow, Robert Opel, and Jack Fritscher**
- **Why Tom of Finland Never Appeared on the Cover of *Drummer* While Embry Owned It**
- **Gay Marriage, Leather-Style: 1976**
- **Gay Face Uncloseted: “Tough Customers” and “Tough Shit”**

“The past is never where you think you left it.”

—Original Cockette Rumi Missabu (James Bartlett), 2014

Editor’s Note:

Jack Fritscher was the only *Drummer* editor to shoot *Drummer* covers: eight in total. As a photographer, he was also the only *Drummer* editor to shoot photographs for the interior and centerfold of the magazine, beginning with *Drummer* 21 (March 1978) through *Drummer* 204 (June 1997).

Drummer covers, at least some of them, provide handy hooks in the timeline of *Drummer* history. Drawings graced the covers of many of the first issues because well into the Titanic 1970s gays remained as afraid of cameras as they had been before gay liberation when cops used cameras as power-tools to gather facial recognition for legal prosecution. As a result, there are

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[HOW TO LEGALLY QUOTE FROM THIS BOOK](#)

not many early cover photos displaying the faces of the first-class party-people who innocently cruised on at full speed not knowing that ahead lay the iceberg of HIV. In the way that John Embry shied away from outing the gay “face,” so did his successor Anthony DeBlase for his first few covers (*Drummer* 99, 100, etc.)

To me, the essence of movies is the human face. The perfect photo for a magazine cover is also the human face. The eight cover photos I shot for *Drummer* between 1977 and 1993 all feature face. Three were shot with David Sparrow: *Drummer* 21, *Drummer* 25, and *Drummer* 30; the other five I shot solo: *Drummer* 118, *Drummer* 140, *Drummer* 157, *Drummer* 159, and *Drummer* 170. I also shot two covers for *Drummer*’s sibling, *Mach* (*Mach* 20, April 1990 and *Mach* 22, December 1990). The *Drummer* 24 cover I cast, designed, and assigned to photographer Robert Mapplethorpe is also all about the human face of my friend, Elliot Siegal. *Time* and *Newsweek* proved that nothing sells a magazine like a face.

Branding in *Drummer* 29, page 64, my original “Tough Customers” feature which I had debuted in *Drummer* 25 (December 1978), I created my *Drummer* Outreach program and asked invisible readers to shoot and share the personality of their own faces. As a gay activist journalist, I specifically crafted “Tough Customers” to help guys come out of the closet. If Harvey Milk’s Castro Camera was among the first photo shops to develop gay men’s sex pictures of themselves, I figured the next step was to out those grassroots selfie photos in *Drummer* which in the 1970s was that decade’s New Media:

KeeRIST! If youse guys are gonna send us your hot pictures for publication, at least include your FACE. Who wants to look at a disconnected cock? *Drummer* is a magazine, not a gloryhole....This is almost the Eighties, doncha know!

At the request of publisher DeBlase, I also shot the “color-revival” cover and centerfold photographs of Palm Drive Video model Keith Ardent for *Drummer* 118 (July 1988) which was, DeBlase wrote, “the first color nude photography *Drummer* has offered in years...and more full color than the magazine has ever had before.” (*Drummer* 118, page 4) His words were one of his many passive-aggressive digs at Embry for publishing *Drummer* on the cheap by dropping the beautiful interior color that had graced many of the early issues.

PARTIAL SURVEY OF *DRUMMER* COVERS AND “THEME” ISSUES:
A BACK-STORY NARRATIVE OF ORAL HISTORY

The survey of the following select *Drummer* covers shows how face and bodies and drawings and photographs evolved in early *Drummer* into the “theme covers” shot by Fred Halsted, Robert Opel, Sparrow and Fritscher, and in one instance, Mapplethorpe.

Drummer 1 Cover: drawing by Bud; drawing also used as symbol of Embry’s “Leather Fraternity” mail-order club.

Drummer 2 Cover: publicity photo by Fred Halsted from his film, *Sextool*; no faces showing; however, the face and torso of Val Martin, the star of *Sextool*, are featured on the back cover.

Drummer 3 Cover: uncredited publicity photo from the film, *Born to Raise Hell* (1974); with his face showing, this is the first *Drummer* front cover for Val Martin who became a star in *Born to Raise Hell*; Martin appeared on the front covers of *Drummer* 3, 8, 30, and 60.

Drummer 4 Cover: photo by Robert Opel of model’s face obscured into a “virtual drawing” referencing a leatherman on acid.

Drummer 5 Cover: drawing by Chuck Arnett, the man who introduced the needle into Folsom Street sex, profiled in a feature article by Robert Opel and produced by Jack Fritscher, “Lautrec in Leather,” *Drummer* 4, January 1976; also in “Chuck Arnett: His Life, Our Times,” by Jack Fritscher, *Drummer* 134, October 1989, reprinted in Mark Thompson’s classic anthology *Leatherfolk: Radical Sex, People, Politics, and Practice*.

Drummer 6 Cover: drawing by British artist, Bill Ward, who, from his *oeuvre* as large as Tom of Finland’s, contributed his serial-cartoon strip, *Drum*, as well as other erotic heroes, to so many dozens of issues he became the artist with the most pages published in *Drummer*.

Drummer 7 Cover: documentary photo by Robert Opel of faces, partially obscured, of two male grooms kissing at a gay wedding—leather style in Los Angeles. The Philadelphia magazine, *Drum*, profiled a “Gay Marriage in Rotterdam” on the cover of *Drum* #26, September 1967; *Queens Quarterly Magazine*, Volume 2 #4, Fall 1970, also featured “Gay Marriage.”

Before I made David Sparrow my *Drummer* photographer in 1977, he and I were married on the roof of 2 Charlton Street, New York, on David’s birthday, May 7, 1972, to mark the third year of our ten-year domestic

relationship. The wedding was performed by the Catholic priest, Jim Kane, the nationally popular leatherman who was four times featured in *Drummer*:

1. in two stories by our mutual friend, Sam Steward aka Phil Andros: “Babysitter” (*Drummer* 5) and “Many Happy Returns” (*Drummer* 6);

2. in one photo feature “Dungeons of San Francisco” (*Drummer* 17); and

3. as “Frank Cross” in my feature article “The Janus Society” (*Drummer* 27).

In my zero degrees of separation within *Drummer*, I should disclose that from 1968-1972 I had an S&M affair with my lifelong friend, the Reverend Jim Kane, who also in 1970-1971 commissioned and published my media columns, such as “The Chicago Seven” and “You’re in the Midst of the 2nd American Revolution,” in his monthly Catholic newspaper *Dateline Colorado* (Colorado Springs), for which he was priest-editor. Through Kane, I met Phil Andros whose stories I agented and produced for *Drummer* 5 and 6. Seeing how much in love the Sparrow and I were, Kane, feeling a tad jealous, began actively to seek a lover. In that hunt, I was Kane’s “advisor” during his difficult year-long courtship of former football player, Ike Barnes, as chronicled in dozens of his signed and archived letters to me.

February 2, 1971. Dear Jackanddave [*sic*], The razor strop you sent [as a gift] is great...plan to use shortly on Ike Barnes, my new m from N.Y. state...1959 Rose Bowl half-back for Ohio State...mus-cled, and out of his gourd on my style....—Jim

In San Francisco, during 1971 and 1972, the Fritscher-Sparrow duo were house mates with the newly partnered Kane-Barnes duo in a flat owned by Anthony (Tony) Perles at 4131 19th Street, four doors from 19th and Castro Streets. Perles was the author of *The Peoples’ Railway: History of the San Francisco Muni* (1980); when he was unemployed in 1978, I hired him on my staff when I managed the proposals department at Kaiser Engineers, where I also hired John Trojanski, a fellow seminarian, whom I groomed as a *Drummer* writer and photographer in *Drummer* 25, “In the Habit: Sex in the Seminary,” December 1978. After *Drummer*, when I was seconded from Kaiser Engineers to manage the writing for the San Francisco Municipal Railway’s Muni Metro Light Rail Vehicle Startup Program, I hired another writer, a man about town known publicly as Roger of San Francisco who soon after began his ball-busting S&M company, Shotgun Video.

At the San Francisco Municipal Railway, I quickly learned that Muni at that time was managed, truth be told, by a dedicated circle of

leather-identified homosexuals trying to solve the perpetual problems of mass transit and buses and trains running on time. As a new broom from Kaiser Engineers, I wrote from scratch for the San Francisco Muni Metro all the safety and procedures manuals, and the bus billboards introducing the new Muni Metro rail cars and station layouts to a city learning how to use it, as well as the *Elderly and Handicapped Guide to Muni Metro*. It was amusing to me to be a gay author writing *Drummer* while writing billboards for buses, and a leather writer penning brochures instructing people where to go. Calling upon favors within that city bureaucracy, I was able in 1980 to secure for David Sparrow a permanent position, for which he was qualified, that he kept until he died of AIDS in 1992.

Our *Drummer* Salon encompassed writing, photography, sex, art, and real estate. David Sparrow and I helped Kane and Barnes remodel their newly purchased fixer-upper home at 11 Pink Alley. That silly address caused much hilarity in our leather Bloomsbury. The *pink* sounded gay and the two words together sounded like the G. I. American-in-Paris thrill: the sex district *Pigalle* pronounced as “Pig Alley.” Because Kane was a famous priest *whipmeister* and a founder of the Society of Janus, it became a sexual and social code: “Have you been to Pink Alley?”

The Kane-Barnes living space was built above a garage and became famous for their first-floor garage dungeon, entered through a hidden door upstairs in the kitchen floor, as well as for their upstairs dinner parties where we sat around the table with artists such as author, artist, and tattooist, Sam Steward; my lover Robert Mapplethorpe; my longtime playmate, the German commercial photographer, Gerhard Pohl, the director of scatological films, who became a *Drummer* contributor; my fuckbuddy, who was also the art director of *Drummer*, Al Shapiro aka the artist A. Jay, and Touko Laaksonen aka Tom of Finland. At this location, my friend and travel companion, photographer Gene Weber, shot black-and-white pictures documenting Kane and Barnes in their dungeon for *Drummer*.

That season, Tom was traveling with his longtime lover, Veli, who spoke only Finnish. It was Tom’s first trip to the United States in February-March 1978 for his first American exhibitions. Tom opened at Robert Opel’s Fey-Way Gallery in San Francisco at an invitation-only 8 PM reception on Friday, February 3, with a second personal gallery appearance by Tom on Saturday, 3-6 PM, February 4, for the opening of the show running February 4-15. Tom appeared at Fey-Way courtesy of Eons Gallery in Los Angeles where he and his show opened on Friday, February 17, 1978.

It was a singular high point of the *Drummer* Salon, when for February 9, 1978, I arranged a dinner party, aided by Al Shapiro, to cross-pollinate

the best of the *Drummer* talent at that moment present in San Francisco. Because I employed all the guests in one way or another from my editorial desk at *Drummer*, I took a kind of glee in anticipating the needs of gay icons who wished to meet other icons back in that first decade of liberation when icons were colliding for the first time. In the carousing melodrama that was the *Drummer* Salon, it was like setting up a gentlemen's Algonquin Club supper, clever and agreeable and toned not at all like a scene from *The Boys in the Band*.

The February 9 soiree was such a *Drummer* triumph that in his letter to Douglas Martin, my ever-ascending friend Sam Steward, who hungered for his own charmed circle ala Gertrude Stein, shrewdly overstepped and attributed to himself the creation of my dinner party. Sam, at that time, was an unlikely host of anything. He was nearly seventy, and old for his age. He was a drug-and-alcohol-addicted hermit of melancholy hiding in Berkeley, and he was pretty much grandfathered—through his being published in *Drummer*—into post-Stonewall culture for his S&M writing penned in earlier decades for *Der Kreis (The Circle)* whose closing in 1967 troubled him deeply. Sam Steward, who always depended on the kindness of strangers to drive him and feed him and fuck him, never organized much more than his 1950s *spintriae* orgies of sailors. Hung up on straight rough-trade hustlers, he famously had little regard for other gay men. I met him in 1969, and I doubt if he ever served a trick a sandwich, much less hosted a dinner party. I am certain that Sam did not know Al Shapiro, Tom of Finland, Robert Opel, or Robert Mapplethorpe until I introduced them to him, as I also did to Kane and Barnes. In fact, Sam Steward had no connection to any one of the dinner party guests except to his caretakers Kane and Barnes who were social-climbers enough to agree to my invitation that they, in their own striving to collect a Pink Alley salon, would be foolish not to entertain such an iconic gay summit of leather artists, photographers, and writers.

Present on my editorial guest list for that February 9 dinner party were hosts Kane who swanned at the head of the table and Barnes who skivvied in the kitchen; my lover Robert Mapplethorpe; my pal, Fey-Way Gallery owner and Oscar streaker Robert Opel; my creative partner and erotic intimate, Al Shapiro, the art director of *Drummer*; and the editor-in-chief of *Drummer*, who happened to be me, a New Journalist swimming in history and taking notes of the forces I had unleashed to sit together for the first and only time at one dinner table.

This one evening indicates how powerful was the *Drummer* editorship (no matter who was editor) in organizing all the disparate talents who

filled its pages. My motive was to see, out of my editorial curiosity, at least, what the iconic guests, combined or collaborating, might come up with to refresh the ongoing hungry issues of my magazine. The power of *Drummer* pulled Mapplethorpe unbidden by me to my desk. It pulled Tom of Finland and Sam Steward as well. In that time on the international leather scene, *Drummer* was the only game in town.

It is worth noting that *Drummer* publisher John Embry never met Sam Steward, or cared to figure out who Steward's pseudonymous Phil Andros was. Jeanne Barney also never met Sam. But she was most gracious to him when I suggested he submit his stories to *Drummer*, and she published him, in the midst of the April Slave Auction turmoil, in *Drummer* issues five and eight (March 1976 and September 1976).

Justin Spring quoted Sam Steward's self-focused letter, dated "Valentino's Day [February 14], 1978," about this February 9 dinner party in his biography, *Secret Historian: The Life and Times of Samuel Steward, Professor, Tattoo Artist, and Sexual Renegade*. Sam Steward was, even as a friend I admired, a wise and wizened queen who could control an arcade of rough sailors with an eyebrow, but a dinner party? He had the certain kind of Ionesco absurdist gravitational pull that comes when sexual bottoms in search of a center try to balance their subordinate lives by claiming to be the primal cause of other peoples' efforts on the self-styled "power bottom's" behalf.

As a resurrectionist of Steward's writing under Jeanne Barney in *Drummer*, I was never one of my dear Sammy's controllable sailors. Inside his demure demeanor, he was a Napoleonic banty of a man who tried to trump everyone, and hustle his hustlers and friends and 1980s acolytes, such as John Preston, to get the future canonization he wanted by giving the upcoming generation what they wanted: their ancestral connection to him. When the obsessive Sam Steward tied up loose ends, he was always the center of the knot. I adored him as an intellectual friend and as an old gent whom I respected as a pioneer gay writer, but I was always careful of his diktats because after I interviewed him on audiotape in 1972, he abruptly told me, who became aghast, I could not do what I had a grant for: publish an article about him. As an alcoholic with a taste for hustlers, he had impoverished himself, and out of his poverty, he decreed: "You can't publish anything I told you until after I'm dead. I have to live off these stories." I understood his concerns and complied even as I had to explain to the grant giver that I could not publish my research. Nevertheless, I didn't drop him because I truly liked him, and we remained pals for twenty-four years, but his request warned me to be ever analytic of him and his motives.

TOM OF FINLAND AND *DRUMMER*

Below: The [single brackets] are insertions by Justin Spring into his own quotation from Sam Steward's letter; the [[double brackets]] are my observations.

On February 9, 1978, on one of his increasing rare nights out, [[the agoraphobic]] Steward had the pleasure [[because of my invitation]] of meeting Tom of Finland...Steward [[who was a star-fucker of Valentino, Stein, and Toklas]] wrote Douglas Martin that “the living legend Tom of Finland...is actually a Finn named Tuoko [[sic; Touko]] Laaksonen—a nice old geezer, my age bracket, with a kind of long horsey face...[Since] Jim Kane and Ike Barnes wanted to meet him...[[Sam begins the structure of his little prevarication]] I arranged [another] dinner [with him] and [the art dealer] Robert Opel and [[my lover]] Robert Mapplethorpe. Anyway, Tom and I were toasted [[by the *Drummer* editor, as I well recall doing]] as the two dirtiest men in the Westron [[sic]] world, and as responsible for an ocean of cum deep enough to float a battleship....

During the dinner, Steward had a long conversation [[it was a sentence or two tossed off by the nasal-drip New York Mapplethorpe]] with the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, who apparently [[Apparently? As an eyewitness, I rest my case.]] told him that his erotic studies of black males had been partly inspired by similar studies by George Platt Lynes....[[as well as, and even more so, the studies of black males shot by Miles Everitt and George Dureau. It is meaningful that Mapplethorpe, shooting leather personalities and players in San Francisco, never bothered to lens a portrait of Sam.]]

Four days after Sam Steward wrote to Douglas Martin, Tom of Finland, acknowledging the actual source of the dinner party, wrote to Al Shapiro and me on February 18, 1978, from New York where he continued his American tour:

Many thanks for the dinner party which we both, Veli and I, enjoyed very much. I'd liked to stay in San Francisco much longer, but even those few days made me feel happy. Seattle [where he visited between San Francisco and LA]

was interesting and L-A rainy. N. Y. Is cold but warmer weather has been promised in the next days. After two busy weeks here [in New York where he had a sold-out exhibition at Stompers Gallery], I'll fly back to Finland to start working again.—All the best..., Tom.

On July 27, 1978, Tom of Finland once again wrote to Al Shapiro and me at *Drummer* saying thanks to us all for squiring him around San Francisco. Tom was also very pleased with Robert Opel's "Interview of Tom of Finland" in the four-page layout that Al and I produced and edited for my *Drummer* 22 (May 1978):

...thank you personally for your hospitality during my visit to San Francisco. I enjoyed meeting you and being around in places with you. And I must say I envy you being able to live and work in a city like San Francisco. I found it very inspiring. I also want to tell my thanks for the *Drummer* issue 22 which I received some days ago. I liked Robert Opel's interview, the photos were well selected and the whole article looked good, much better than those in local L.A. papers. I am very pleased.....Best wishes, Tom

Has anyone ever asked why Tom of Finland never appeared on the cover of *Drummer* while John Embry owned it? Tom was a surefire draw for readers. Like Robert Mapplethorpe's duality of "art and commerce" and very like Peter Schjeldahl's great assessment of Frieda Kahlo in *The New Yorker* (May 25, 2015), Tom of Finland existed in gay pop culture somewhere "between sainthood and a brand": gay sainthood as sweet man and artist, as well as brand name selling Tom of Finland Company cologne and clothing on fashion runways sponsored by Absolut Vodka in the way Robert Mapplethorpe sold art calendars and calla lily plates and appeared in print ads for Rose's Lime Juice. Even before Tom's first arrival in the United States, Al Shapiro and I invited his work into *Drummer* in 1977. Tom was, in fact, so accomplished professionally that for seventeen years until 1973 when he retired to devote his time to his own art, he was senior art director at the Helsinki branch of the global ad agency McCann Erickson featured years later on the television series *Mad Men*.

In my archives exist three letters from Tom of Finland to Al Shapiro which tell the tale of how Tom's offer to publisher Embry went nowhere because of Embry's lack of response to the reticent and overly modest Tom who was willing to sell his Tom of Finland original to *Drummer* for \$300, or lease the use of his *Drummer*-specific

drawing for \$50. It is indicative of how out of touch Embry was with the erotic heart and heritage purpose of *Drummer*. For fifty bucks, thirty-seven years before Tom was honored with an iconic Finnish postal stamp, the skinflint Embry missed the “roots” chance to publish what would have been a gay history coup: the legendary Tom of Finland on the cover of the legendary *Drummer*. The cavalier Embry, always choosing favorites, blew Tom off because he had already contracted an equally brilliant European artist, the British Bill Ward, who over the years, as the artist most published in *Drummer*, created hundreds of *Drummer* pages with his ongoing graphic-novel, *Drum*.

Tom of Finland wrote on September 12, 1977:

Touko Laaksonen, Tehtaankatu 7 D 29, 00140 Helsinki 14, Finland.

...Well, I'd make a cover to *Drummer* with pleasure. I am busy now a couple of months, but in the end of November I should have time. I charge \$300 for the original. I have not signed yet the contract with Eons, but if it is fixed by then, the price will be more. If *Drummer* prefers buying only the reproduction rights, I could also consider it. In that case, I'd like to know how much the magazine pays for that.... —Tom

Ninety days later on December 12, 1977, Tom of Finland noted *Drummer* dragging its feet. He also enclosed a photocopy of the crayon drawing he had specially designed to accommodate the *Drummer* cover logo and headline:

Even though I haven't heard from you since my last letter, I've made this drawing thinking of *Drummer's* cover. It is drawn with wax crayons (in colors) in size about 17"x22" and in the layout space [around the figure of a leatherman], I have left layout space for the title and usual headlines. Perhaps you'd talk with *Drummer* people [Code: meaning the intractable, stubborn Embry] of this and let me know if the magazine wants the picture or not. As I mentioned earlier, I am willing to sell the original to *Drummer* (because it is specially made for the purpose) for \$300.00, but if they prefer to buy only the right to use the picture on the magazine's cover, it is also OK. As I said, I don't know what the prices are at *Drummer* in that case, so let me know. Anyway I don't give it under \$50.00....I am coming to San Francisco in early February for a week or two. I hope I can meet you

then.... —Sincerely, Tom

Ten months later, just before his New York, October 28, 1978, double show with Etienne, Tom of Finland wrote to Al Shapiro. Tom was hoping he could move permanently to America, and he was patiently awaiting for Embry to respond to his many inquiries. He wrote on October 16, 1978:

Dear Al, ...I hope to be able to come to California some time next year, but probably not for good even if I wished so. I can write again to John Embry about the publication [of the drawing(s)] if you think he is interested. I on my side should like the idea because there are several in my opinion very good drawings which are never published before....and also because I know that the technical quality in printing is good at Alternate Publishing.... —Tom

Embry was my “Original-Recipe Tough Customer.” When Tom of Finland died, Embry managed to cobble up a half-page generic obituary of Tom featuring a murky reprint of one of Tom’s drawings in *Manifest Reader 16* (1992) page 77. As if he begrudged Tom’s talent and success, Embry never once mentioned any connection at all of the legendary Tom of Finland to the legendary *Drummer* which Embry had sold in 1986. Thus does an unrequited grudge in an obituary change the bits of history. Embry’s obituary for Tom of Finland was a passive-aggressive “revision by omission” of what tension and drama historically occurred between the two men. It was characteristic of Embry’s lifelong “Los Angeles modus operandi,” or, what San Franciscans postulate about LA, that “LA gays fight over everything in the gay world because, it seems, so little is of any value.” If the LAPD had not driven John Embry out of LA, his revolving door of unpaid talent contributing to *Drummer*, backed by his erstwhile frenemies, including Larry Townsend, Ed Menerth, and even Jeanne Barney, would have gladly given him the gate.

Tom of Finland triumphed over Embry’s Blacklist when Tony DeBlase, giving the finger to Embry’s shunning of Tom, published a boot drawing by Tom on the cover of *Drummer 113* (February 1988).

When the Sparrow and I split up after ten years in 1979, Kane—happy I had given up saving Sparrow—was finally able to fulfill his desire to “have and own” David, and to “fix” his alcohol and drug dependency. He rented David an apartment he and Barnes owned next door to their Pink Alley

house, at 42 Pearl Street, where David lived until he died February 20, 1992. Kane, ever the leather parish priest, rented to “bottom” S&M males and females because they were easy tenants to counsel and control; he also rented a flat to Society of Janus founder Cynthia Slater who was also a famous “pain” bottom. When elderly, Jim Kane and Ike Barnes also bought a second home in Sebastopol, on Blank Road, one mile from my home and ten miles from John Embry, where, selling Christmas trees six weeks each year at the nearby Sorenson Farm, they both died, but not before a smirking Kane told me to “hang on to your Mapplethorpe pictures because someday they might be worth something.”

Gene Weber, who shot Kane and Barnes with me (top page 17) for “Dungeons” (*Drummer* 17, July 1977), documented deep inside the secret truths of San Francisco S&M. Even as we balled frequently, I kept him artistically involved with *Drummer* and he lensed me in the underwater fisting shots of my “Gay Sports” feature in *Drummer* 20 (January 1978), as well as with my longtime playmate and “co-star” bottom, the redheaded Russell Van Leer, in *Blood Crucifixion*. That was one of Gene Weber’s famous mixed-media 35mm S&M extravaganzas which he frequently screened for invited audiences of gentlemen in his luxury apartment on Buena Vista West Avenue. He was a millionaire living in the only high-rise Art Deco building on the street. Guests enjoyed his view overlooking the sex trails in Buena Vista Park to the east across the street. Very high-tech for the time, he projected his images on his art-theater-sized 20-foot-wide roll-down screen using a bank of nine projectors programmed so fluidly that his presentation looked like a movie when, in fact, it was a series of 35mm slides dissolving at different speeds into each other. When Gene Weber died, October 2, 1992, he bequeathed his vast 35mm-color transparency collection to the GLBT Historical Society of San Francisco where our *Blood Crucifixion* and his other erotic photography may be viewed.

Besides having vacationed together in the Carribean (1977) for the *Drummer* 20 scuba sex shots, Gene Weber and I had traveled together to Japan in October 1975, spending time in the outskirts of Tokyo at a Samurai house of bondage where the vibe was polite but a bit cool because the owners remembered World War II. The model in Gene Weber’s photos for “Cock Casting” (*Drummer* 15, May 1977) and for “Plaster Casting” (*Drummer* 18, August 1977) was our friend, Max Morales, the handsome and spiritually centered athlete who was great friends with Paul Gerrior aka Ledermeister, the archetypal Colt leather-bear model. In North Beach theater-clubs and cabarets featuring “Live Topless Girls,” Max appeared nightly, or at least, regularly, oozing male sex appeal, as the exotic-erotic dance partner of several

female dancers. Max Morales was fictionalized in *The Holy Mountain* section of *Some Dance to Remember*, Reel 6, Scene 4.

This is the kind of salon of S&M and talent that *Drummer* fell into when *arriviste* Embry found himself exiled from LA to San Francisco late in 1976 and early 1977. Cut to the quick by his banishment by the LAPD, Embry was like a man who had lost his country. He never became a “San Franciscan.” He had left what heart he had in Los Angeles, and his arrest and exile may have so eaten at his guts that the stress may have contributed to the colon cancer he suffered soon after he set up the *Drummer* office where I worked at 1730 Divisadero Street in San Francisco.

Distressed in his long move from LA and from illness, Embry was absent from *Drummer* for seven formative months in 1977 (February-May, and again, August-December) during which time Al Shapiro and I, eager to please this new publisher we had just met, created the San Francisco version of *Drummer* that changed it from an LA magazine into an international success. In an almost ironic coincidence in Autumn 2000, John Embry, heading for the International Mr. *Drummer* contest which he had scorned and sold in 1986, ran down the stairs on his way to the airport and fell, breaking his hip. He observed about that illness what was true about his earlier long bout with cancer: “The healing process takes a lot of energy, leaving little time for the creative process.” (*Super MR 7*, page 5) Even when physically healthy, Embry was far from a creative force behind *Drummer*. At best, he was a show-runner seeing to the mechanics and commercial accounts of publishing. He never understood the soul of *Drummer*. The hiatus caused by his colon cancer, sad to say for him, left open a wonderful door for the creative staff to invent a magazine that Embry never understood. That wasn’t the intent, but it was the result.

So confused and jealous was Embry by the reasons for the success of our re-imagined *Drummer* that he sometimes filled his subsequent magazines such as *Super MR* with page after page of reprints from *Drummer*, and often, with reprints of the very features and fiction, like “Prison Blues,” that I had penned for the *Drummer* he so misunderstood that he sold it. For twenty-four years, he groused and regretted that sale until his death in 2010.

As an eyewitness of his regrets, I offer his *Super MR 7* which contains nearly a dozen pages nostalgic for the early *Drummer* whose lightning caught in a bottle he never really understood anymore than he understood the rainmakers who turned *Drummer* into a perfect storm of sex, masculine identity, and sadomasochism.

One wonders if Embry so loved *Drummer*, why did he plunder the profits, sell it, and, then, why did he try to reinvent a new *Drummer* inside

the magazines he later created? While Embry's sale of *Drummer* saddled DeBlase with Embry's old debts, it freed *Drummer* from his fiscal tyranny that caused *Drummer* staff and contributors so much hardship because, when it came to paying the talent, or honoring subscriptions, Embry was a deadbeat who was notorious in LA, according to *Drummer* editor-in-chief Jeanne Barney, as "Robert Ripoff."

The reason Embry sold *Drummer*, according to DeBlase, was that Embry owed so many writers, artists, photographers, printers, suppliers, and staff so much money, siphoned off for his many real estate and publishing ventures, that he had no choice but to sell and run. Insulted when he discovered Embry's hidden debts, DeBlase felt betrayed at Embry's failure of "leather fraternity," and expressed his bitterness in several of his *Drummer* editorials.

Drummer 8 Cover: photo by Roy Dean of model Val Martin body-painted by tattoo artist, Cliff Raven, to look like a virtual drawing; Raven (*Drummer* 14, p. 47) was named after a bird by his mentor, the tattooist Sam Steward who was the tough old bird known as Phil Sparrow aka Philip Sparrow aka Phil Andros whose story "Many Happy Returns" appeared in the same issue; within the Chuck Renslow Family, Raven tattooed me in Chicago in 1969; David Sparrow's true surname, *Sparrow*, was his family name, and his mother's name was "Nellie" which caused him to be terribly teased among the queens when he came out in Evansville, Indiana. I used my lover, David Sparrow, as basis for the fictitious characters named "Arrow" in my 1969 novel, *I Am Curious (Leather)* aka *Leather Blues*, and "Teddy" in my 1990 book, *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*.

Drummer 9 Cover: photo by Robert Opel of the male "Gloria Hole" in gender-bender drag, face obscured by makeup, from the LA Cycle Sluts performance-art troop which included Mikal Bales, founder of Zeus Studio later featured in *Drummer* for its bondage-nipple-whipping videos; this was *Drummer* magazine's most unpopular cover ever. Leather animus against gender-fucking anima began in the next issue with "Letters to the Editor" and simmered for years: in *Drummer* 134 (October 1989), an angry reader wrote on page 7:

GENDERFUCK LIVES. In your latest issue of *Drummer*, I saw a listing for "Fantasia Fair Provincetown" listed in the "Leather Calendar." For your information, "Fantasia Fair" is a national

convention for transvestites; far from a leather event. Better do some more checking into what you list as “leather events.” —BL, Provincetown”

Publisher DeBlase alluding to Embry’s misstep responded: “The genderfuck was unintentional (this time).”

Drummer 10 Cover: drawing by Rex; his last for Embry’s *Drummer* until invited back by DeBlase to draw the milestone cover of *Drummer* 100, recalling at that time that Rex had drawn the illustrations for covers of two of my books, *Leather Blues*, which was excerpted in *Drummer*, and for *Corporal in Charge of Taking Care of Captain O’Malley and Other Stories*, which was the first book anthology of *Drummer* fiction.

Drummer 13 Cover: photo by Lou Thomas aka “Jon Target”; my long-time (beginning October 1968) friend, Lou Thomas, co-founder of Colt Studio with Jim French, split off Colt in 1968-69 to found Target Studio in New York; in his startup of Target Studio and wanting to print a *Target* magazine, Lou Thomas did a publishing trial balloon by printing a limited edition of my 1969 novel, *I Am Curious (Leather)* aka *Leather Blues*. Using low-tech hectograph, he published one hundred copies in the popular, and very underground, samizdat style of gay “magazines” created with unfolded pages of typing paper printed both sides and bound with two staples. Other pertinent examples I collected in the 1960s of this leather-and-fetish format pre-dating *Man2Man Quarterly* (which was typing paper printed and folded in half), and predating *Drummer* are: *Justice Weekly*, a tabloid published in Canada 1949-1972; *SMADS*, Old Chelsea Station, New York; *Wheels* published at 254 West 25th Street in New York by the Cycle Motorcycle Club; *The Inner Tube* published by the V (Five) Senses, Murray Hill Station, Manhattan; and *Buddy Riders* published by Essem Enterprises, San Francisco. Years later, *I Am Curious (Leather)* was excerpted in *Son of Drummer* (1978), and announced by Embry as “a forthcoming *Drummer* novel.” That did not happen.

Leather Blues, the “1960s Leather Novel That Could,” had a gypsy history: after its publication by Target and its excerpt in *Son of Drummer*, it was published in book form by Gay Sunshine Press (1984) and sold 10,000 copies; it was also serialized in eight issues of *Man2Man Quarterly* 1980-1982; and was excerpted as the premiere fiction in the first issue of *Skin* (January 1979), and in *Inches*, Volume 1 #3 (July 1985), and in the Magcorp magazine, *Stroke*, Volume 4 #4, 1985.

On June 4, 1981, Lou Thomas wrote a letter on Target Studios stationery asking me to contribute to his *Target Album* magazine: “Dear Jack: ...As you know, I’ve long admired your writing ability—it was a sad day for *Drummer* when you and A. Jay left.” On August 21, 1981, Lou wrote a similar letter of invitation to Al Shapiro. Both letters are in my leather archives. The story which I sent him was “The Dirtiest Blond Contractor in West Texas.”

Drummer 14 Cover: photo by Lou Thomas, Target Studio.

Drummer 15 Cover: drawing by A. Jay aka Al Shapiro, founding San Francisco *Drummer* art director; A. Jay’s only *Drummer* cover.

Drummer 19 Cover: publicity photo by Joe Gage from his film *El Paso Wrecking Corp.*

Drummer 21 Cover: photo by Fritscher-Sparrow of San Francisco cabaret pianist, John Trowbridge; together, he and I wrote the S&M song, “Masochist Stomp,” for *Drummer*.

Drummer 23 Cover: photo by Lou Thomas; Target Studio photo of homosexual “Barry” whom I chose to place on the *Drummer* cover because he typified my “Redneck” theme issue; Barry exuded universal sex appeal as a tattooed Southern model also for Colt Studio and for David Hurles’ Old Reliable Studio. As a photographer, I wanted to shoot Barry, but he was one model who got away. My longtime friend David Hurles, usually so generous in sharing his models, was oddly possessive of his LA “exclusive” on Barry, and I dropped the subject. Barry was, in fact, the real person on whom James Leo Herlihy based his character Joe Buck in his 1965 novel *Midnight Cowboy*. Jon Voight who played Joe Buck in the 1969 film, the only X-rated movie to win the Oscar for Best Picture, was cast because of his resemblance to Barry who was more sexy and handsome; Voight was no Joe Buck, and, with his anti-gay Tea Party politics, he eventually made his entire acting career impossible to watch.

Drummer 24 Cover: photo by Robert Mapplethorpe is the quintessential Mapplethorpe leather portrait; I cast and designed the photograph and commissioned Mapplethorpe to shoot it. I requested the portrait be in color which was unexpected for Mapplethorpe who usually shot people in black and white, and only flowers in color. I cast my NY playmate, Elliot Siegal,

who had never modeled, because he was an Emersonian representative man dripping with the *verite* of “dirty Mineshaft appeal.” After meeting Elliot Siegal, Mapplethorpe fell in lust and shot him several times: “Elliot and Dominick 1979,” Photograph 11 in *Robert Mapplethorpe: Ten by Ten* (1988). Elliot lived at 58 Charles Street where Mapplethorpe shot him.

Drummer 25 Cover: photo by Fritscher-Sparrow of pre-steroid Mike Glassman, the future Colt model “Ed Dinakos,” armpits rampant, and smiling which is unusual in leather photography.

Drummer 30 Cover: photo by Fritscher-Sparrow; a carefully coded “fisting” two-shot of Val Martin and his lover, Bob Hyslop aka the model “Leo Stone.” This is the last *Drummer* cover shot by the team of Fritscher-Sparrow. We lensed it in Sonoma County. Its design was inspired by our annual October visits to the International Arm-Wrestling Championships in Petaluma, California, one hour north of the Golden Gate Bridge.

The *mano-a-mano* eye-stare and arm-wrestle signify how my first love, David Sparrow, and I were struggling at the end of what had been our mostly wonderful ten-year affair. The pose is also symbolic of how David Sparrow and I were arm-wrestling Embry over the esthetics and payment for our photos in *Drummer*. As David Sparrow struggled with his addictions and depression during our divorce, he was increasingly angry at Embry and unavailable for shoots.

Conditions dictated that, solo, I shot Val Martin and Leo Stone one more time for the “Spit” centerfold of *Drummer* 31. The weekend shoot again occurred at the Sonoma ranch of Ed Linotti, one of the founding members of the Pacific Drill Patrol (PDP), the first uniform club founded in San Francisco (1972). When published in *Drummer*, my Martin/Stone centerfold, because of Embry’s dirty math subtracting “Fritscher,” was bylined “by David Sparrow.”

Drummer 118 Cover: photo by Jack Fritscher of Keith Ardent (real name, Coleman Jones) from the Palm Drive Video feature, *Pec Stud in Black Rubber*. I shot this 35mm transparency on November 22, 1987, at the urgent request of the model, Keith Ardent, whose HIV bucket list included the hope of being made immortal on the cover of *Drummer*. (Keith Ardent also modeled for Christopher Rage and Zeus Studio.) True to Ardent’s wish, this July 1988 cover shot was designed in studio to be an archetypal and representative *Drummer* cover.

In content, it showcases a true-life *verite Drummer* player encircled with

fetish items covering his frontal nudity and presenting the *hauteur* of a top.

In design, the purposely vertical shot is composed by shooting up at the standing figure to empower him. At the top of the frame, I left air-space for the *Drummer* title, and at the side for a stack of cover copy. The photo is lit with off-camera electric spotlights to enhance the “outdoor shoot” which is signature of the early “Fritscher-Sparrow” and later “Fritscher solo” covers shot outdoors in contrast to most *Drummer* covers shot indoors.

On April 18, 1988, I again photographed Keith Ardent, who was a lovely man, in his quintessential leather video, *Let's Play Doctor*. Keith Ardent, wish-fulfilled and thereafter known as “a *Drummer* cover model,” lived until September 9, 1992.

Drummer 140 Cover: photo by Jack Fritscher of Randy Rann from the Palm Drive Video feature, *Daddy's Tools*. In this June 1990 issue, DeBlase announces *Drummer* is “For Sale” on page 5.

Drummer 157 Cover: photo by Jack Fritscher of “Moustached Bodybuilder” inserted on lower left of cover next to photograph by Steve Savage of the model Brutus who was the star of four Palm Drive Video features. Printed twice on the cover and on page 10, this Fritscher photograph is mistakenly uncredited in *Drummer* 157; its provenance is that Fritscher’s “Moustached Bodybuilder,” shot in 1978, was also the cover of *California Action Guide* (August 1982).

Drummer 159 Cover: photo by Jack Fritscher of Larry Perry, the most famous 1980s bartender at the Spike in LA who had appeared in *Drummer* 132, page 45. My photo, shot October 3, 1990, is a production still from my Palm Drive Video feature, *Naked Came the Stranger*, starring Larry Perry. This photo shared the cover with a larger photo of IML winner, Lenny Broberg, shot by Scott Beseman. My agreement with the second publisher of *Drummer*, Tony Deblase, was that Larry Perry was to be solo on the cover. But Deblase sold *Drummer*, to its third publisher, Martijn Bakker, and agreements, as they always did at *Drummer*, shifted. According to editor Joseph W. Bean, Perry had somehow offended Bakker who allegedly said, “That man will never be on the cover of my magazine.” I figure, according to the divine right of porn kings, new owner Bakker, who is a mystery, may have demanded sex and Larry Perry said, “Fuck you.”

Nevertheless, the brilliant Bean managed to print the extremely popular Perry’s appearance on this first cover of the first issue published by Martijn Bakker, known unfairly, as the last of the assassins who murdered *Drummer*.

Drummer 170 Cover: portrait photo by Jack Fritscher of Donnie Russo. I cast and directed Donnie Russo during the first six weeks of his meteoric video career in my features *Homme Alone*, *When Bodybuilders Collide*, and *Rough Night at the Jockstrap Gym*. I immediately pitched him and his videos to the new regime of Martijn Bakker's "Dutch" *Drummer*. Every porn director in America wanted to shoot Russo and I thought him perfect as the new, younger, "fin de siecle" *Drummer* man. Playing on the pop-culture provenance of "Beatlemania" and "Wrestlemania, I submitted my concept of a "Russomania" theme issue to Joseph W. Bean who, as he exited *Drummer*, relayed the baton to Marcus-Jay Wonacott who was progressing from editorial manager to editor. Ten minutes later, I felt the freshness of the punch line inherent in my proposed pun lose its dewiness when the word "Wrestlemania" was suddenly and gratuitously added to the very next cover of *Drummer* 161 (March 1993) featuring a depressingly drab shot of a joyless leather model that had nothing at all to do with wrestling. My proposal of "Russomania" for the future issue (170) was the trigger that had shot the theme word "Wrestlemania" to the cover of that very next issue. This cloning wasn't Bean's or Wonacott's fault during that stressful period of in-house confusion as *Drummer* changed owners. For years staff had struggled to fill the next hungry issue with little regard to future issues. Fixated on the minutiae of one issue, editors, who came and went, often could not see the bigger picture. To them, *Drummer* was a bunch of separate issues. To me, *Drummer* was a very long book in which each issue was a continuing chapter documenting an eyewitness and narrative arc of gay culture and human drama very like an episodic television show with its long-form storyline that spans the series. But, then, I have congenital "*Drummermania*."

The minute *Drummer* 161 hit the stands, the World Wrestling Federation (WWF), the owner of the word "Wrestlemania" threatened suit against *Drummer* for copyright infringement unless *Drummer* pulled the issue off the newsstands. The principle involved was similar to the "Gay Olympics" copyright fiasco in 1986 when the homophobic United States Olympic Committee won its suit prohibiting Dr. Tom Waddell, the gay Olympic athlete, from calling the first "Gay Games," which he founded, the "Gay Olympics." Just so, the WWF had owned its coined word long before *Drummer*'s not-so-fair use made it seem as if the WWF had suddenly come out of its obvious "closet" into a gay leather magazine! Ironically, while protecting its intellectual property from the clutches of *Drummer* in 1993, the WWF itself was sued in 1994 by the "World Wide Federation for Nature" for using the initials "WWF," and had to re-brand itself as the "WWE," World Wrestling Entertainment.

Intellectual property historians might note that *Drummer* 161 was so scofflaw that Maya Angelou might also have sued because the entire text of her poem written for Bill Clinton's 1993 Presidential Inaugural, "On the Pulse of Morning" was boldly published across pages 6 and 7 with no note of permission or copyright.

In *Drummer* 185 (May 1995) on page 51, editorial manager Wickie Stamps published a photo-spread titled "Forbidden *Drummer*" featuring pictures from *Drummer* 161 and confirming the WWF law suit.

A legal wrangle over the use of a trademarked name [Wrestlemania] on the cover [of *Drummer* 161] forced all copies of that issue off the newsstands and into the shredder. Only a few copies of #161 [*sic*] ever made it into public hands.

All that notwithstanding, on the cover of *Drummer* 170 (December 1993), my word "Russomania" was pasted in large letters next to my cover photograph of Donnie Russo.

Drummer 188 Cover: photo by Ram Studios/Franco of model Ted Downer. In what should have been a classic and gorgeous "Twentieth Anniversary Issue" in *Drummer* 188, Wickie Stamps was, according to my interview with her on January 20, 2011, rather coerced by circumstances into producing an issue that in art design looked like a ransom note cut-and-pasted from previous *Drummer* issues. Frankly, I saw Embry's characteristic "reprint fingerprints" and his revisionist history of *Drummer* all over the issue created at the precise time Embry and Robert Davolt were conspiring together over Davolt returning *Drummer* to Embry even as the Dutch publisher Martijn Bakker found he could not control San Francisco *Drummer* from Amsterdam. At my home in 2014, Dutch leather historian Pieter Claeys told me that Bakker said: "I couldn't fly to San Francisco every week to put out the fires. (Ik kon neit elke week naar SF vliegen on de brandjes daar te blussen.)" The issue also was full, not of leather photographers's warm and personal erotic work, but of corporate video photographs, and a grinding agenda to sell its soul for money that moved away from what it had been in the liberated 1970s and what it had become in the politically correct 1980s into the queer feminism of the 1990s. In the magazine's tortured last three years (1996-1999), Embry seemed obsessively dedicated to regaining his control of *Drummer* and its institutional memory through his operatives such as John W. Rowberry and Robert Davolt, who termed himself the "last publisher" of *Drummer*.

In 1999, as *Drummer* died, Davolt claimed to have delivered to Embry,

who by then had no connection to *Drummer* for thirteen years, the coveted treasures of the *Drummer* files of manuscripts, photographs, and drawings which, in fact, belonged to the authors, photographers, and artists who since 1975 had expected to have their original work returned to them. In return, Embry hired Davolt to work on Embry's *Super MR* magazine. Davolt appeared as an editorial writer in *Super MR* 7 where he wrote this amazingly cheeky propaganda statement about the shameless Embry's obsession with "seizing the legacy" of the magazine he dumped as a losing proposition in 1986:

"When the magazine [*Drummer*] ceased publication, employees, advertisers and subscribers were left dangling in the wind...It was *Super MR* [i.e.: John Embry] who, as a good will gesture, offered *Drummer* subscribers and advertisers a credit equal to their unfulfilled subscriptions and advertising. It may be difficult to seize the legacy....It is particularly embarrassing [*sic*] to Alternate Publishing [John Embry] who originated the [*Drummer*] title 25 years ago, the name is now just an empty trademark.

I am not an attorney, but as far as I have been able to research, there is no paper trail to indicate that the *Drummer* title was ever a registered trademark. In Summer 1977, after the 1976 copyright laws were significantly changed about ownership of the contents in magazines, I specifically asked Embry if he were going to trademark the title of the two-year-old *Drummer*. I was inside *Drummer* and concerned for its future. *Drummer* was my job and had become my love. Embry was spending so much money on his court case regarding the 1976 Slave Auction, he shrank from even more legal expenses, and seemed to think his titles, like his content, were covered by simple copyright under "*Drummer Publications*" (*Drummer* 3, p. 3) and then "Alternate Publishing (*Drummer* 7, p. 1, the First Anniversary Issue). On the masthead of *Drummer* 39 (August 1980), Embry tried to invoke a kind of "trademark" protection by claiming instead "copyright" protection.

Drummer, Drumsticks, Drumbeats, Tough Customers, Tough Shit, Leatherman's Notebook, Man to Man, Astrologic, In Passing, and Drum are copyrighted names of departments appearing in *Drummer Magazine*. Copyright 1980 by Alternate Publishing.

Trademark and *copyright* are two different categories. Names and titles are not protected by copyright law. Embry may, however, have been relying on

the laws about “unregistered trademarks.” Therefore, besides the *Drummer* magazine founded in 1975, there exists *Modern Drummer* magazine founded in 1977. One is about gay leather and the other is about musical percussionists.

INNOVATIONS INSIDE *DRUMMER*

Editor’s Note

Fritscher Kickstarts the Grassroots *Drummer* Outreach Program to Relate Directly to Readers with “Tough Customers” and “Tough Shit.”

In *Drummer* 25 (December 1978), Fritscher invented the “Tough Customers” photo feature to liberate recently closeted readers’ primal fear of the camera, and to make the pages of *Drummer* reflect genuine gay faces rather than only models. No other person was involved with creating “Tough Customers.”

In 1990, *Tough Customers* became its own magazine created by the astute *Drummer* editor Joseph W. Bean. *Drummer* publisher Anthony DeBlase wrote in *Drummer* 128 (May 1989), that Jack Fritscher’s “Tough Customers” concept “is obviously one of the, if not the, most popular feature in *Drummer*.” In the first issue of *Tough Customers*, DeBlase acknowledged on page 4 the grass-roots outreach Fritscher invented to reflect the readers: “When we asked *Drummer* readers what they liked best about each monthly issue of *Drummer*, the response was overwhelming: ‘Tough Customers!’”

As a companion to “Tough Customers,” Fritscher also created the news-clipping column, “Tough Shit,” which was announced on the contents page of *Drummer* 22 (May 1978), but not included; “Tough Shit” appeared for the first time in *Drummer* 23 (July 1978). It parodied human foibles from a leather humor point of view.
